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“Handle with care’: The mediating role of I-deals in the relationship between supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities and employee outcomes”

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‘Handle with care’: The mediating role of schedule i-deals in the relationship between supervisors’ own care-giving responsibilities and employee outcomes

Abstract

Drawing on theories of perspective-taking and i-deals, this study explores the impact of supervisors’ own care-giving responsibilities for elders and parental status on subordinates’ schedule i-deals. Moreover, we investigate the extent to which schedule i-deals mediate the relationship between supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities and two employee outcomes: satisfaction with work-family balance (SWFB) and turnover intentions (TI). Using a sample of 520 dyads involving 137 supervisors and 520 employees, the results of multi-level analysis show that supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities for elders is positively related to schedule i-deals, but their parental status is not. The findings also show that schedule i-deals mediate the effect of supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities for elders on subordinates’ SWFB and TI. This research contributes to the i-deals’ literature by focusing on the role of managers’ own care-giving responsibilities in facilitating the provision of schedule i-deals to their subordinates and by exploring the consequences of schedule i-deals to gain an understanding of the mutually beneficial nature of such deals. From a practical point of view, supervisors and HR departments might utilize schedule i-deals to drive desirable employee outcomes, in particular their care-giving responsibilities, and to engender a family-supportive organizational culture.

Keywords: Schedule i-deals, supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities for elders, supervisors’ parental status, work–family balance, turnover intentions.

Introduction

Idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) are personalized employment conditions negotiated by individual workers with their employers. These include deals relating to employees' careers and tasks (task i-deals) and to the flexibility regarding the schedule and timing of their work (schedule i-deals; Liao *et al.*, 2016; Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). Two core tenets of i-deals are that they are individually negotiated by the employee, and that they benefit both employer and employee (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). Thus, in practice, employees usually engage in negotiations and bargaining processes with their supervisors (Rousseau, 2005), and the interests of both parties must be taken into consideration.

The literature on negotiations and bargaining suggests that successful outcomes depend largely on the extent to which each party considers the other's viewpoint (Galinsky *et al.*, 2008). This implies that, in i-deal negotiations, a successful deal is more likely if the supervisor is able to adopt the viewpoint of the employee, and vice versa. Based on theory relating to perspective-taking (Galinsky *et al.*, 2008; Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000), we argue that having a supervisor who has first-hand experience of juggling work and family demands him/herself is positively associated with a greater prevalence of i-deals. Indeed, previous empirical research shows that the probability of one person taking the perspective of another increases if the focal person has been in a situation similar to that of the target person (Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000). Therefore, supervisors who are involved in caring for others are likely to be more able to help employees to achieve better work–family balance.

In this study, we examine the extent to which supervisors' own care-giving responsibilities affect whether, in the eyes of their followers, they grant more schedule i-deals. We also investigate the extent to which schedule i-deals mediate the relationship between supervisors' care-giving responsibilities on the one hand, and employee

satisfaction with work-family balance (SWFB) and turnover intentions (TI) on the other hand (see Figure 1). SWFB describes an employee's "overall level of contentment resulting from an assessment of one's degree of success at meeting work and family role demands" (Valcour, 2007: 1512). We focus on SWFB because high satisfaction corresponds with a situation in which the time, energy and overall resources devoted to work and to family are close to the individual's 'preferred' allocation of resources. TI refers to employees' intentions to quit their current work position or organization if they find a way to do so (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). TI is important to managers and companies since it represents the last step prior to quitting, being an employee action that has costly organizational consequences; Wanous, 1980).

---INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE---

First, because research on i-deals has largely ignored their antecedents, especially those on the supervisor's side (for an exception, see Hornung *et al.*, 2009), we contribute greater insights into the development of i-deals. We also focus on a situational characteristic (care-giving responsibilities) that may shed more light on how supervisors' own family circumstances may relate to their leadership behaviours – in this case, granting schedule i-deals to their subordinates. We expect that personal experience of the complexities of care-giving will foster supervisors' ability to explore the benefits of i-deals, thus increasing the likelihood of subordinates receiving schedule i-deals. We ground our study in perspective-taking theory (Galinsky and Moskowitz, 2000; Galinsky *et al.*, 2008), which is an important contribution in itself, since most previous i-deals research has used social exchange theory as an underlying theoretical framework (Liao *et al.*, 2016). As such, perspective-taking presents a potential alternative explanation of how i-deals unfold.

Second, using a cross-level model (Bal *et al.*, 2012; Liao *et al.*, 2016), our study provides an expanded nomological network for i-deals, and thus provides greater insight into the antecedents and consequences of schedule i-deals. Granting schedule i-deals requires individual employees and their supervisors to agree on the individualized deals (Rousseau, 2005). Since supervisors are likely to manage several employees, the so-called nested structure in granting schedule i-deals implies that the prevalence of granting may be similar for employees who report to the same supervisor, although their content may differ.

Finally, previous scholars have studied i-deals mainly in Anglo-Saxon (Kossek and Ollier-Malaterre, 2013) and other European contexts (Hornung *et al.*, 2010, 2014), overlooking the potential relevance of i-deals in other contexts and cultures (see also Liu *et al.*, 2013). Our study contributes to this gap in the literature by investigating whether the construct of schedule i-deals is relevant in El Salvador, thereby generalizing previous research to a novel context.

Theory and Hypotheses

I-deals refer to “voluntary, personalized agreements of a non-standard nature negotiated between individual employees and their employers regarding terms that benefit each party” (Rousseau, 2005: 23). Previous research has shown that the two most common types of i-deals in organizations are flexibility and developmental i-deals (Ng and Lucianetti, 2016; Rousseau *et al.*, 2009). This study focuses on schedule i-deals, a form of flexibility i-deals, in exploring the extent to which the benefits of such deals may enable employees to achieve better work–life balance. Schedule i-deals involve individualized flexibility regarding the timing and location of work (Hornung *et al.*, 2010; Rosen *et al.*, 2013), for example by working partly away from the office or working in non-standard shifts (Hornung *et al.*, 2009; Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014). Our focus on schedule

i-deals is relevant as recent studies (Rousseau et al., 2009; Bal et al., 2012; Bal & Rousseau, 2015) have categorized schedule i-deals as being more tangible, observable, and concrete in nature compared to career or work i-deals. Moreover, schedule i-deals, unlike other types of i-deals, involve discretion regarding where and when one works and are therefore the most proximal and relevant type of i-deals to explore how supervisors' non-work related responsibilities may affect employees' behavioural outcomes at work.

This research goes into SWFB and TI as employee outcomes given their relevance for both employees and organizations, particularly during a period of increasing need for protection of workers' sustainable employability (De Vos and Van der Heijden, 2015; Van der Heijden *et al.*, 2015), due to an ageing worldwide labour market (Philips and Liu, 2012) and decreasing opportunities for early retirement (De Lange *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, given the ambiguous and counter-intuitive findings of previous research, which has used schedule i-deals as predictors of employee attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (Hornung *et al.*, 2008; Ng and Feldman, 2010), more scholarly work on this specific type of i-deal is needed to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon (see also Vidyarthi *et al.*, 2014).

Association between supervisors' perspective-taking and subordinates' schedule i-deals

Previous research on the supervisor's role as an antecedent to the subordinate's i-deal reveals that the quality of exchange relationships between supervisor and subordinates (LMX) relates positively to successful negotiation of various types of i-deal, such as preferred task activities (Hornung *et al.*, 2010, 2014; Rosen *et al.*, 2013), career development (Hornung *et al.*, 2014), flexibility in scheduling work (Hornung *et al.*, 2014; Rosen *et al.*, 2013), and control over work locations (Rosen *et al.*, 2013). Similarly, subordinates who perceive their supervisor to be considerate (Hornung *et al.*, 2011) and

whose supervisor demonstrates positive emotions (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017) report a higher success rate in negotiating development and schedule i-deals (Hornung *et al.*, 2011).

I-deals require both parties to agree on what they consider to be beneficial outcomes (Rousseau *et al.*, 2006). We expect that supervisors with care-giving responsibilities for elders and children below the age of fourteen will be better equipped to take account of their employees' perspectives (Parker and Axtell, 2001). As mentioned above, research on negotiation processes shows that mutually beneficial outcomes for both parties are most likely when each party is able to consider the other's viewpoint. Perspective-taking, defined as "a cognitive process in which individuals adopt others' viewpoints in an attempt to understand their preferences, values, and needs" (Grant and Berry, 2011: 79), fosters the necessary understanding by supervisors, which in turn forms an important reference point for creating productive environments that are advantageous to both employees and the organizations for which they work (Galinsky *et al.*, 2008). Galinsky *et al.* (2008) find that a capacity for perspective-taking helps negotiators to find the necessary balance between self-interest and other-interest. Specifically, supervisors who have experienced the complexities, swift changes in circumstances and unexpected emergencies often entailed by care-giving responsibilities, will be better equipped and more willing to understand the intricacies faced by others in similar situations. This assumption is consistent with the recent findings of an exploratory study by Gerace *et al.* (2013), which indicates that those taking the perspective of the other and the situation are able to *switch places* with the other person. In other words, perspective-taking implies that the focal person activates self-information, such as experiences and needs, and applies it to the target person (Davis *et al.*, 1996). For example, husbands' first-hand experiences of household activities may influence their ability to take their wives' perspectives (Cast and Bird, 2005).

Moreover, Batson *et al.* (1996) report that experience of a certain need increases empathy for another person currently experiencing the same need. Specifically, if supervisors have care-giving responsibilities of their own, this may trigger processes of perspective-taking and empathy, because they may feel a need to facilitate the care-giving for their employees' parents or children as well. In particular, as supervisors and their employees are highly dependent on each other, perspective-taking creates the conditions necessary to reach mutually beneficial agreements. This argument is congruent with Pierce *et al.*'s (2013) finding that, in cooperative contexts, perspective-taking creates a foundation for offering aid, time and money to those in need of them.

Building on the perspective-taking angle, we expect that supervisors' non-work-related care-giving responsibilities allow them to take their employees' perspectives and needs into account. That is, as a result of experiencing care-giving needs themselves, supervisors are better equipped to think in an integrative fashion and to consolidate their own views and interests to protect the work–family balance of their subordinates. We thus hypothesize that:

H1: There is a positive association between supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders and subordinates' schedule i-deals.

H2: There is a positive association between supervisors' parental status and subordinates' schedule i-deals.

Schedule i-deals and employee outcomes

We argue that subordinates' schedule i-deals relate positively to SWFB because of the direct benefits resulting from such deals, such as having the option to complete tasks from home or working in a flexible schedule (Bal and Rousseau, 2015). Schedule i-deals may help employees to balance their work and private life demands, leading to reduced work-

to-family conflict and better work–life balance (Beauregard and Henry, 2009; Tietze and Musson, 2003). As such, having the flexibility to work at times that better suit family needs enables employees to manage domestic and care-giving activities more effectively. Working at times that suit other life-sphere needs is likely to lead to feelings of fulfilment and positive moods, accompanied by greater satisfaction with the division of resources between work and family (Rothbard, 2001). Moreover, employees who have access to schedule i-deals may plan and manage their family responsibilities more proactively (Kossek *et al.*, 2006), which may enhance their satisfaction with the allocation of time and energies between work and family, being the basis of SWFB.

H3: There is a positive association between subordinates' schedule i-deals and SWFB.

In addition, as a result of benefiting from schedule i-deals in the form of working according to a flexible schedule, employees are more likely to stay in their organization. Research on i-deals supports this proposition, showing that there is a negative association between flexibility i-deals and employees' TI (Ho and Tekleab, 2016). Extending this line of research, we hypothesize that:

H4.- There is a negative association between subordinates' schedule i-deals and their TI.

Indirect effect of supervisors' care-giving responsibilities on employee outcomes through schedule i-deals

In the context of our research, we argue that supervisors' care-giving responsibilities constitute cognitive and non-emotional mechanisms through which negotiations about schedule i-deals are facilitated, and subsequently transcend on employees' outcomes. More specifically, perspective-taking is a cognitive and non-

emotional type of mind-set which involves the ability to recognize and understand the thoughts and needs of others (Davis, 1983). Research has shown that perspective-taking is positively associated with directing attention to others and helping them (e.g., helping colleagues with their work; Oswald, 1996). Perspective-taking usually leads to smoother, cohesive and rewarding behaviours at work (e.g., Oswald, 1996). Therefore, we argue that supervisors' responsibilities at home lead to positive attitudes and behavioral intentions of subordinates through successful schedule i-deal negotiations. As such, supervisors' care-giving responsibilities will trigger them to evaluate and rationalize similar needs of their subordinates. Having successfully negotiated schedule i-deals with their supervisors, subordinates are likely to function better at work via enhanced work performance and lowered TI. We hypothesize:

H5: Subordinates' schedule i-deals mediate the association between supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders and SWFB (5a) and TI (5b).

H6: Subordinates' schedule i-deals mediate the association between supervisors' parental status and SWFB (6a) and TI (6b).

Methodology

Procedure

We aimed to explore our conceptual model in a context different than where most i-deals research has been conducted in (e.g., the USA, Anand et al., 2010; Western Europe; Hornung et al., 2009; Ng and Feldman, 2010). El Salvador is an appropriate context in this sense as keeping close family ties and taking care of elderly characterize acceptable norms and values in this society. Thus, this context is likely to make schedule i-deals a potential tool to address subordinates' needs for schedule flexibilities which they can allocate for their elderly and children (Bal & Rousseau, 2015).

El Salvador is a democratic Central American country with a population of just over six million, where Spanish is the official language. The first author of this paper was responsible for collecting data in 2014 from supervisor–employee dyads in three companies in El Salvador: UNI, FARMA and MONEY. UNI is a private higher-education institution, FARMA is a family-owned pharmaceutical company, and MONEY is a subsidiary of a bank headquartered in another Latin-American country. We accessed these companies through non-academic partners in the country, who were part of a Foundation with the mission of helping organizations to become better employers. The researchers provided survey tools and the Foundation secured access to the companies.

In each company, the researchers guaranteed full confidentiality to all participants. In consultation with company's HR representative, we decided that the final sample should have a balanced number of supervisors according to four criteria: 1) number of men and women in the company at different levels; 2) number of employees in headquarters as well as at the various company sites; 3) number of employees with direct reports; and 4) different age groups. Having calculated the number of people required to participate in the survey across each criterion, we chose randomly, by alphabetical order, the people in each department who would be invited to participate.

We contacted supervisors and employees independently by e-mail and used a specific code to match the data. We administered the questionnaires in Spanish, with scales that were translated from English to Spanish using the translation and back-translation-procedure (Brislin, 1986).

Sample

We used power analysis (Ellis, 2010) to invite participants from the selected companies.¹ We invited 568 employees and 139 supervisors in MONEY, a company with 1,764 employees in El Salvador, and received 407 and 105 responses respectively. We invited 364 employees and 96 supervisors in FARMA, a company with 989 employees in the country, and received 339 and 56 responses respectively. Of the 197 employees and 39 supervisors invited from UNI, an institution with 292 employees in total, we received 156 and 25 responses respectively. Our overall response rate was 79 per cent for the employees and 67 per cent for the supervisors. These response rates may seem high, but they are in line with the previous experiences of the first author, and are normal for the Latin-American region. Notwithstanding the high response rates, the need to match employee and supervisor responses resulted in a final usable sample of 520 matched dyads, representing 142 supervisors and 520 employees. We were able to match 144 employees and 39 supervisors from FARMA, 279 employees and 81 supervisors from MONEY, and 97 employees and 22 supervisors from UNI.

On average, in our sample, each supervisor was matched with 3.66 employees (ranging from two to seven subordinates). The mean age of the employees in the sample was 35.19 years ($SD = 9.11$), 63.4 per cent were female ($N = 329$), and their average tenure with the organization was 9.49 years ($SD = 7.47$). A total of 282 employees (54 per cent) had care-giving responsibilities for elders, and 255 employees (49 per cent) had

¹ This approach determines sample size estimation in field studies and is helpful for avoiding over- and under-sampling. Determining the right sample size facilitates access to participants, since companies may not be willing to expend the necessary time and effort required to grant access to all employees. In our case, we also avoided accessing all employees because most managers were also the “subordinates” of a higher-level manager. Thus, we conducted basic power analysis, taking into account the number of dyads, and with the target of achieving a 70 per cent response rate and a 95 per cent confidence interval for each company.

children under the age of 14. The average age of the supervisors was 42.88 years (SD = 9.16), 59.1 per cent (N = 81) were female, and their average tenure was 15.11 years (SD = 7.24). A total of 62 supervisors (43 per cent) had care-giving responsibilities for elders, and 66 (47 per cent) had children below the age of 14.

Measures

For all measures, a seven-point Likert scale was used (from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree).

Supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders was defined as “informal and unpaid care provided by family and friends that includes meeting a variety of physical, emotional, and financial needs” (Calvano and Dixon, 2015: 1). We asked the supervisors whether their parents or in-laws were alive (Criterion 1) and, if so, whether any of them had a need for help (Criterion 2). If they met both criteria, we asked whether any of the elderly who needed help were living in the respondents' homes and whether the respondents were providing regular emotional or material help (Criterion 3). Previous eldercare studies have used similar criteria (Tolkacheva *et al.*, 2014). We coded the supervisors as 1 if they met the three criteria, and 0 otherwise.

With regard to *supervisors' parental status*, we asked the participating supervisors to indicate whether they had children below the age of 14. We followed the suggestions of Gelmen and Meyer (2011) and coded as 1 those indicating that they had children below the age of 14, and 0 otherwise.

Schedule i-deals (employee perceptions) were measured using Rosen *et al.*'s (2013) three-item measure of ex post schedule i-deals. This study is the only one, to date, that developed a validated scale on i-deals, and the validity of schedule i-deal items has been empirically supported in most recent research (Ho and Kong, 2015; Guerrero *et al.*, 2014; Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017). However, most of these studies were conducted in Western

European and North American contexts. To ensure that the items of the schedule i-deals' scale are valid in our context, we conducted additional exploratory factor analysis (EFA) using data collected prior to the present research (Study 1, Philippines, N = 202 full-time employees; Study 2, El Salvador, N = 187 full-time employees). In both samples, the three items for schedule i-deals loaded significantly onto their corresponding construct, with loading values exceeding the recommended cut-off points (above 0.70).

Unlike the original study which used a 5-point Likert scale, we used 7-point Likert scale for schedule i-deals to increase the variance in participants' responses and provide a more accurate representation of participants' evaluations of schedule i-deals. We based our reasoning on research suggesting that a broader set of scale anchors demonstrate higher reliability (Krosnick and Presser, 2010; Lewis, 1993). This argument is also supported by empirical research (e.g., Finstad, 2010). However, we converted schedule i-deals' items into a five-point Likert scale to establish whether the reliability of items changed or data were lost (7 and 6 were recoded to 5, 5 was recoded to 4, 4 was recoded to 3, 3 was recoded to 2, and 2 and 1 were recoded to 1). The results revealed that a seven-point Likert scale was more reliable (0.83) than a five-point Likert scale (0.79).

An example item was: "At my request, my supervisor has accommodated my off-the-job demands when assigning my work hours" ($\alpha = 0.83$).

For *satisfaction with work-family balance*, we used Valcour's (2007) five-item scale and asked the participating employees to indicate how satisfied they were with aspects relating to their work-family balance. One example was: "The way you divide your time between work and personal or family life" ($\alpha = 0.94$).

For *turnover intentions* (according to employee responses), we used O'Reilly *et al.*'s (1991) four-item scale and transformed the question formats into full statements. An example was: "I frequently think of quitting my job" ($\alpha = 0.88$).²

Control variables. At the supervisor level (Level 2), we controlled for gender (0 = male) and organization. To control for organization, we created two dummies for FARMA and MONEY, with UNI as the reference. At the employee level (Level 1), we controlled for age and gender (0 = male) as well as care-giving responsibilities for elders (0 = No) and whether the supervisors had children below the age of 14 (0 = No).

Analysis

We used multi-level analysis to test our hypotheses. Hypotheses 1 and 2 proposed a 2-1 model in which supervisor-level (Level 2) independent variables were related to employee-level (Level 1) dependent variables. Hypotheses 3 and 4 involved 1-1 models, which we tested using random coefficient models (RCMs). RCMs estimate associations between Level 1 predictors and outcomes within Level 2 units by allowing the intercepts and slopes to vary (LaHuis and Ferguson, 2009). However, since the results showed that there was very little variation in the slopes, we fixed the slopes in the final model. Finally, Hypotheses 5 and 6 proposed 2-1-1-models, with Level 2 independent variables and Level 1 mediators and dependent variables. We applied multi-level structural equation modelling (MSEM) using Mplus (Muthén and Muthén, 2015) to analyze these indirect associations (Preacher *et al.*, 2010). According to Zhang *et al.* (2009), the indirect effects in 2-1-1-designs must be of a between-indirect type because the independent variable (a

² Cultural characteristics of El Salvador are defined by high power distance and low confrontation (House *et al.*, 2004). For this reason, and based on our experience with similar participants in previous projects, as suggested by previous research (Krosnick and Presser, 2010), we decided to transform the question format into statement format in measuring TI to reduce the risk of feeling confronted and to achieve more reliable and genuine responses.

Level 2 variable) cannot co-vary with within-cluster individual variables. Therefore, the indirect associations proposed by Hypotheses 5 and 6 are the result of the product of the between-level $X \rightarrow M$ -slope and the between-level $M \rightarrow Y$ -slope. Because within- and between-level relationships may differ (Zhang *et al.*, 2009), we report both within- and between-level coefficients in Tables 1 and 2. Confidence intervals and overall model fits were used to assess the indirect effects.

----INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE----

Results

Table 1 displays correlations and descriptive statistics for the main variables. It also includes intra-class correlation coefficients (ICCs) for the mediators and dependent variables used in this study. The ICCs (ICC1) were 0.07 for SWFB, 0.11 for turnover intentions, and 0.19 for schedule i-deals, providing sufficient evidence to attribute the scores to group membership (Lebreton and Senter, 2008). Table 2 shows the results of MSEM analyses used to test Hypotheses 1 to 6. MSEM tests all hypotheses simultaneously, and the model fit indices are reported in the text below. The results show that supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders were positively related to successful schedule i-deal granting ($\gamma = 0.42(0.19)$, $p < 0.05$), which supports H1. Supervisors' parental status did not relate to the level of schedule i-deal granting ($\gamma = -0.07(0.19)$, $p = ns$), herewith rejecting H2.

----INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE----

The results for the within-level effects reported in Table 2 show that schedule i-deal granting was significantly associated with both SWFB ($\gamma = .33(.06)$, $p < .01$) and TI ($\gamma = -.31(.07)$, $p < .01$), herewith supporting Hypotheses 3 and 4. Hypothesis 5 predicted that schedule i-deal granting would mediate the effect of supervisors' care-giving

responsibilities for elders on SWFB (H5a) and TI (H5b). Given the significant indirect between-level association of supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders with SWFB through schedule i-deal granting ($\beta = 0.22(0.11)$, $p < 0.05$ [$CI_{low} = 0.43$; $CI_{high} = 0.01$]), Hypothesis 5a is supported. However, there is a non-significant between-level indirect effect of supervisors' care-giving needs for the elderly on TI through schedule i-deal granting ($\beta = -0.07(0.12)$, $p = ns$ [$CI_{low} = 0.16$; $CI_{high} = -0.30$]), herewith rejecting Hypothesis 5b.

Finally, the non-significant between-level association between supervisors' parental status and schedule i-deal granting implies rejection of Hypothesis 6, which predicted that the latter mediates the effect of supervisors' parental status on SWFB (H6a) ($\beta = -0.04(0.10)$, $p = ns$ [$CI_{low} = -0.25$; $CI_{high} = 0.16$]) and TI (H6b) ($\beta = 0.01(0.03)$, $p = ns$ [$CI_{low} = -0.05$; $CI_{high} = 0.07$]). Furthermore, the model including the between-level association between supervisors' care-giving responsibilities for elders and supervisors' parental status on the one hand, and SWFB and TI on the other hand, through schedule i-deals' granting, shows a good fit with the data ($\chi^2 = 22.04$, $df = 19$, $p > 0.05$, $CFI = 0.96$, $RMSEA = 0.02$, $SRMR_{between} = 0.06$). These outcomes provide additional support for Hypotheses 5, 6a and 6b.

Discussion

Building on perspective-taking theory, we have shown that supervisors' care-giving commitments are positively linked to subordinates' schedule i-deals, which, in turn, contribute to enhanced SWFB and lower TI. In focusing on supervisors' situational rather than dispositional traits, we contribute to a nascent line of research which has only recently begun to explore the role of supervisors in the i-deal making process, including the role of supervisors' observation of subordinates' behaviours (Hornung *et al.*, 2011) and supervisors' emotions (Rofcanin *et al.*, 2017).

Our focus on supervisors in i-deal making also contributes to research on differentiated HR practices. Previous research has underscored the “sense-giving” role of supervisors in modifying HR practices (McDermott *et al.*, 2013). The behaviours of supervisors deliver clues to their subordinates about the content of HR practices and policies, including when, to whom and why these practices might be applied (Maitlis, 2005). Supervisors’ care-giving responsibilities may thus serve as powerful sources of sense-giving to subordinates, reflecting supervisors’ future intentions and decisions concerning employees’ differentiated HR arrangements (McDermott *et al.*, 2013).

Moreover, in response to a call for more multi-level research (Liao *et al.*, 2016), we have used a multi-level mediation design (Preacher *et al.*, 2010) that shows how an unconventional group-level characteristic – the situational supervisor-level characteristic of care-giving responsibilities for the elderly – is an antecedent of subordinates’ schedule i-deals. The ICC of 0.19 further underpins that the supervisor level (Level 2) explains considerable variance in the extent to which subordinates perceive that they are granted schedule i-deals. However, much more empirical research is required to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of supervisors’ characteristics on i-deals’ negotiation processes and mechanisms. A next step would be to test cross-level interactions between supervisors’ characteristics, such as care-giving responsibilities, and employee antecedents of i-deals, as well as the moderating role of supervisors’ characteristics, such as personality, on the effects of i-deals on employee outcomes.

Another contribution of this study relates to our focus on employee outcomes that correspond with the content of schedule i-deals. Using supervisor evaluations, our findings show that schedule i-deals relate positively to SWFB and negatively to TI. This is important, as research to date has either lumped together different types of i-deal (Ng and Feldman, 2010), assuming that they have similar effects, or have focused on work-

related employee outcomes (Anand *et al.*, 2010). We have focused on a specific type of i-deals, revealing that they are instrumental in driving SWFB. The finding that supervisors evaluate employee outcomes positively also echoes recent research on i-deals and flexible work practices in general. For example, Collins *et al.* (2013) demonstrate that managers are willing to provide i-deals (for homeworking) to their subordinates as long as they are able to observe employees' performance and to ensure that they are contributing to team efficiency. Managers support and implement flexible work practices (FWPs) for focal employees who are less likely to be disruptive to team efficiency (Kossek *et al.*, 2016).

We also enrich the i-deals' research by adopting perspective-taking theory as a novel angle. Among the antecedents of i-deals, our results show the relevance of situational characteristics such as care-giving responsibilities for elders. Moving beyond previous research that has focused mainly on work-related characteristics as triggers of i-deals, such as task complexity (Hornung *et al.*, 2010) and relationship quality with one's supervisor (Anand *et al.*, 2010), we have shown that another mechanism influences supervisors to grant i-deals: that is, their own care-giving responsibilities. This opens up a new avenue for research, integrating perspective-taking theory to develop theoretical frameworks that facilitate a more thorough understanding of the dynamics between supervisors and subordinates in the i-deal making process.

Interestingly, only the association between supervisors' care-giving responsibilities and subordinates' schedule i-deals was significant, parental status was not significantly associated with subordinates' schedule i-deals. This finding reflects the context of El Salvador where attachment to family and care-giving for elderly members of the family are core values and are expected of the members of the society, irrespective of whether they are married or have children to be taken care of or not. This could be one reason that

supervisors who have care-giving responsibilities for elderly can understand the situation of their subordinates and take their perspectives (Gerace et al., 2013).

The context of El Salvador can be considered a strength of this study. Previous research on i-deals has been conducted mainly in Anglo-Saxon (Anand *et al.*, 2010) and other European contexts (Hornung *et al.*, 2010), overlooking how the concept of i-deals operates in less-developed economies. Our findings suggest that the concept of schedule i-deals is equally relevant to employees in El Salvador.

Implications for human resource managers

Research on i-deals has been predominantly carried out in Western – Northern contexts, showing that work relationship quality or supportive work climate (e.g., LMX, Anand et al., 2010; Liao et al., 2016) are important for supervisors to grant either career or work responsibility i-deals to their subordinates. From the perspective-taking theory angle, research to date has assumed that employees' main needs and preferences lie in the domain of work, such as seeking for new challenges and responsibilities (Ng & Feldman, 2010), overlooking how and why context might shape the formation of schedule i-deals. Unlike the cultural norms and values in many Western – Northern contexts, in contexts where collectivism and family ties are crucial as in El Salvador, perspective-taking also takes the form of addressing employees' non-work needs. Our findings suggest that supervisors along with HR departments need to take into account the cultural norms and values in their company and country in forming i-deals. Accommodating employees' need for flexibility and non-work lives, as in the case of schedule i-deals, is likely to be achieved via building family supportive organisational cultures and encouraging supervisors to show family supportive behaviours. In the context of these organisational cultures, employees using schedule i-deals are likely to function well at work.

It is important to note that in a country like El Salvador, in which informal economy is prevalent and growing (Lara, 2004), employee rights are not granted to the same extent as they are in other Western – Northern contexts. In such contexts, i-deals are highly relevant HR tools to achieve positive employee outcomes, such as high satisfaction with work-life balance and low turnover intentions. Therefore, the recruitment of supervisors who have responsibilities at work as well as at home can stimulate constructive schedule i-deal negotiation processes, and herewith the development of mutually beneficial relationships at work.

Limitations and future research

A main limitation of this study is the cross-sectional nature of its design, which prevents us from making causal inferences. However, we have built on perspective-taking and i-deals theories to establish the directions of our hypotheses. Future research using multi-wave designs might provide more specific information than our cross-sectional approach on stability and change in the variables and about cross-lagged relationships (i.e., over time) (De Lange, 2005).

A main theoretical framework we used to explore our model was perspective-taking (David, 1983), however we did not measure it explicitly. While this approach is seen in i-deals research (e.g., the signaling theory, Ho and Kong, 2015; goal congruence theory, Rofcanin et al., 2017), we suggest research to explicitly measure perspective-taking to clarify how supervisors decide to grant i-deals to their subordinates. Furthermore, we suggest future studies to integrate the emotional side of perspective-taking (i.e., empathy; Davis, 1983) to understand its role in how i-deals unfold.

Perspective-taking is commonly used in crossover research as overarching framework (e.g., Bakker and Demerouti, 2009). Future research might also integrate and explore the cross-over effects of schedule i-deals. Their potential benefits may cross over

to focal employees' spouses at home, enabling them to perform better at work. Such an approach might make a contribution to the conceptualization of i-deals by investigating whether and how the presumed benefits of i-deals go beyond the work domain to include recipients' spouses. This would also enable exploration of relevant social and psychological mechanisms, such as emotional, cognitive and physical partner support, which would enrich the i-deals literature and perspective-taking approach.

In our sample, the way we accessed companies whose employees were registered and recognized in the formal employment system. Given the fact 60 % of the employees in El Salvador are not officially recognized in the employment system, our findings may not be generalizable to the overall business context in the country.

The generalizability of our results is further constrained by the cultural characteristics of El Salvador: Keeping close family ties is important and gender roles are segregated. Although women often work and generate income outside their homes, they are almost exclusively responsible for housework and childcare. In order to generalize our findings to other contexts, future research might be undertaken integrating culture-related measures such as collectivism and family orientation (Fouad and Arbona, 1994; House et al., 2004).

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TABLE 1 *Correlations and descriptive statistics*

		Alpha	Mean	SD	ICC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
<i>Level-2 variables</i>																
1	Parental status of supervisor ^a	-	.47	.50	-											
2	Supervisor care-giving ^a	-	.43	.49	-	-.20**										
3	Organization MONEY ^b	-	.49	.49	-	.01	-.17**									
4	Organization FARMA ^b	-	.32	.46	-	.04	-.06	-.68**								
5	Gender of supervisor ^c	-	.59	.49	-	.34	.14**	-.19**	.07							
<i>Level-1 variables</i>																
6	SWFB	.94	5.11	1.52	.07	-.08	.08	-.05	.12**	.06						
7	TI	.88	2.90	1.97	.11	.02	-.09*	.03	-.09*	-.05	-.38**					
8	Schedule i-deals	.84	5.33	1.64	.19	-.01	.16*	-.07*	.07	.08	.36**	-.21**				
9	Gender of employee ^c	-	.63	.48	-	.00	.09*	-.05	-.11**	.19**	-.01	.09*	.07			
10	Age of employee	-	35.19	9.11	-	-.01	.08	-.11**	.01	.11*	.12**	-.07	-.03	.07		
11	Parental status of employee ^a	-	.49	.50	-	.02	-.06	.01	.09*	-.11*	.02	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.04	
12	Employee care-giving ^a	-	.54	.49	-	.04	-.01	-.04	.06	-.01	.02	.00	.08*	-.07	-.07	-.06

Notes. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ^a 0 = no; ^b 0 = UNI; ^c 0 = male.

TABLE 2 *Results of multi-level structural equation models*

Parameter	Schedule i-deals		Satisfaction with Work-Family Balance		Turnover Intentions	
	Within-level	Between-level	Within-level	Between-level	Within-level	Between-level
<i>Level-1 variables</i>						
M Schedule i-deals	-	-	.33(.06)***	.53(.16)**	-.31(.07)***	-.16(.27)
Gender of employee	.00(.01)	.23(.64)	.02(.01)**	.00(.08)	.00(.01)	.01(.18)
Age of employee	.03(.18)	-.66(1.64)	-.19(.15)	.68(.71)	.42(.24)	1.70(1.22)
Parental status of employee ^a	-.02(.17)	1.31(4.46)	-.02(.15)	.06(.77)	-.12(.20)	-.58(1.61)
Employee care-giving ^a	.12(.17)	6.73(17.46)	-.24(.15)	-.88(2.06)	.29(.18)	2.08(5.15)
<i>Level-2 variables</i>						
X1 Parental status of supervisor ^a		-.07(.19)		-.15(.12)		-.15(.20)
X2 Supervisor care-giving ^a		.42(.19)*		.07(.15)		.42(.23)
Gender of supervisor		.29(.28)		-.10(.20)		-.31(.30)
Organization MONEY ^b		.15(.46)		.72(.24)**		-.09(.38)
Organization FARMA ^b		.58(2.16)		.58(.28)*		.22(.58)

Note. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; ^a 0 = no; ^b 0 = UNI; ^c 0 = male.

FIGURE 1 Conceptual model

